

**To the Co-Chairs and Members of the Housing Committee:**

**Testimony SUPPORTING SB. 168, An Act Establishing a Right to Housing**

**Housing Committee Public Hearing**

**March 1, 2022**

*Submitted by Michelle Lipar, resident of Simsbury, CT*

To co-chairs Senator Lopes and Representative Williams, vice chairs Senator Anwar and Representative Frank, ranking members Senator Cicarella and Representative Polletta, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee, I respectfully submit testimony in my role as a CT resident, mother, student, and future social worker in strong support of SB 168, establishing housing as a right in Connecticut.

I am currently a graduate student in my second and final year of the Master's in Social Work Program at the UCONN School of Social Work. Last year, I interned at the Hartford Public Library, supporting members of the community who needed space to talk, assistance connecting with resources, navigating systems, or other services. By far the most common request people made was for help with housing. This request did not come only from people experiencing literal homelessness, although libraries are a valuable resource for a number of unsheltered people. Many of the requests for help came from people who could not find an affordable apartment. Some people were living in family or roommate situations that were unhealthy, some were couch surfing, some were living in unofficial units, and some were about to have their rents raised to a point that they could not afford to remain where they were. The dearth of affordable apartments in their neighborhoods forced them to either stay in their undesirable conditions, move away from their communities and supports, or lose their homes altogether.


My internship this year is with Journey Home, a backbone organization that coordinates services for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness, including matching clients with vouchers, supportive services, and appropriate housing. Journey Home works with 211 and the Coordinated Access System, and together with their partners they provide an amazingly organized network of supports for the people of Connecticut. But even with all these resources, without a stock of affordable housing, there is a limit to the number of people that can be matched with housing.

Establishing housing as a right in Connecticut, and a devoted committee to ensure policies in line with this right are enacted and implemented in our state, would be a step forward in making Connecticut an even better place to live. With additional recourse and resources at their disposal, government agencies, organizations like Journey Home, and many other service providers would be able to go further in their mission to end homelessness. Besides being a moral imperative, establishing a right to housing would improve our state for everyone, even those who are housing secure. We all benefit when our neighbors and communities are not

vexed by anxiety about housing security and have the support and basic necessities to live productive lives.

I urge the committee to move forward on this bill, and to continue to work to support the provision of additional resources that ensure all people have a safe, affordable, and secure place to live.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Lipar". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michelle" written in a larger, more prominent hand than the last name "Lipar".

Michelle M. Lipar